United Nations

Daily Highlights

Department of Public Information • Central News Section • New York

Prepared by Central News

DH/1692
22 July 1994

FRIDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Secretary-General launches inter-agency appeal for $435 million to aid victims of Rwanda crisis; says international community must respond urgently to genocide caused by hunger, thirst and disease.

+ Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs to leave New York tonight to assess relief operations in Rwanda and surrounding region; to chair pledging conference in Geneva on 2 August.

+ Economic and Social Council urges Secretary-General to further policy measures on sexual harassment in Secretariat; recommends General Assembly act on raising UNHCR Executive Committee membership to 50.

+ General Committee recommends that General Assembly include item on observer status for Sovereign Military Order of Malta in current agenda.

* * *

Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali today launched a United Nations inter-agency appeal for almost $435 million to aid the victims of the crisis in Rwanda. The international community had been confronted with tribal genocide for months, and now it must respond urgently to genocide caused by hunger, thirst and disease. Millions of refugees and displaced persons needed relief, and the situation was beyond the resources and capacity of United Nations humanitarian agencies and non-governmental organizations. "Without substantial financial support from the international community, we shall not be able to meet the humanitarian challenge that faces us," he said.

The immediate priority was to take care of the refugees who had left Rwanda, and to provide humanitarian assistance for those who were still in the country, the Secretary-General continued. He announced that the Security Council would soon approve the creation of a tribunal or commission for Rwanda to examine the question of genocide.

* * *

(more)

For information media--not an official record

Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali today announced that he was immediately sending Peter Hansen, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, to evaluate relief operations in Rwanda and the surrounding region. Mr. Hansen will ensure that coordination mechanisms are in place, and will discuss the means for ensuring humanitarian deliveries with the Rwandan Government.

Mr. Hansen will depart this evening, accompanied by senior officials of United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations working in the region. He will visit the Zairean towns of Goma and Bukavu, followed by the Rwandan capital Kigali. He will then travel to Geneva to chair a pledging conference on 2 August.

* * *

The Economic and Social Council has urged the Secretary-General to further develop comprehensive policy measures to prevent sexual harassment in the Secretariat. In one of two drafts on the advancement of women adopted yesterday, the Council urged the Secretary-General to increase the proportion of women in the Secretariat, especially in senior-level positions. By the second draft, it supported the request of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women for three-week meetings in 1995 and 1996. The Council also decided that the Commission on the Status of Women would examine at its next session the possibility of introducing the right to petition to the Convertion through an optional protocol.

The Council also adopted a draft recommending that the General Assembly take a decision at its next session on the question of increasing the membership of the Executive Committee of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) from 47 to 50 States.

* * *

The General Committee today recommended that the General Assembly include in its agenda for the current session an item entitled "Observer Status for the Sovereign Military Order of Malta in the General Assembly". It also recommended that the item be considered directly in plenary. The representative of Italy said the Order was a unique non-governmental organization that currently maintained diplomatic relations with 64 Member States, and thus should be granted observer status.

* *** *